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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the reasons single parents in San Diego had for choosing either a public day care center or a licensed day care home for their children. A sample of 30 single parents with children in school district administered children's centers was drawn and matched by a similarly geographically distributed sample of 23 parents with children in day care homes. Thirty reasons which might influence parent's choice of child care were used in a Q-sort instrument which required subjects to rank reasons for choosing child care. Data were processed by frequency distribution and clustering and analyzed for significant differences using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic, Chi-square and Student-Fisher t. Results indicated that parents did not choose their child care for reasons which were either child-oriented or parent-oriented; nor did those reasons influence choices between public school day care centers and licensed day care homes. It was found that single parents chose their child care because the facility offered a structured program with a well-trained, competent staff focusing on the needs of the child, easy access in terms of nearness to home and flexibility of hours, and an environment which provides an extension of the home. (Author/RH)

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PUBLIC SCHOOL CENTER VS. FAMILY HOME DAY CARE: SINGLE PARENTS' REASONS FOR SELECTION

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

San Diego State University

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by

Maria Stupp Rothschild

Summer 1978

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PUBLIC SCHOOL CENTER VS. FAMILY HOME DAY CARE:

SINGLE PARENTS' REASONS FOR SELECTION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
The Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	5
The Hypotheses	6
Definition of Terms	6
Children's Center	6
Licensed family day care home	6
Q-sort	7
Single parent	7
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	8
National Day Care Study	8
National Child Care Consumer Study	9
Expectations and Preferences	11
3. METHOD	18
Instrument Development	18
Identifying the Reasons	18
Q-Sort Cards and Board	19

Chapter Page

Data Collection 20

Children's Centers Sample 20

Licensed Day Care Homes Sample 22

The Q-Sort 25

Data Processing 26

Frequency Distribution 27

Child-Oriented Vs. Parent-Oriented Items 27

Clustering 28

Limitations of the Study 28

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 30

Tabulation of Responses 30

Comparison of Children's Center Parents Vs. Licensed Day Care Home Parents 34

Weekly Child Care Cost 34

Responses to Items 9 and 11 35

Parent-Oriented Vs. Child-Oriented Items 37

Clustering of Items 38

Cluster 1: Reasons of Formal Education 38

Cluster 2: Reasons of Practicality 43

Cluster 3: Reasons of Home-Extension 44

Chapter Page

Cluster 4: Reasons of Informal Education 45

Cluster 5: Reasons of Sociability . . 48

Cluster 6 and Cluster 7 50

Parent Clustering and Comparison of Responses 50

Parent Clustering 51

Comparison of Responses 51

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 56

Summary 56

The Problem 56

The Method 57

The Findings 59

Conclusions 62

Hypothesis #1 62

Hypothesis #2 64

General Conclusions 65

Recommendations 67

Practical Applications 68

Further Research 69

REFERENCES CITED 72

APPENDICES 76

A. Q-SORT ITEMS 77

B. LETTERS 81

Chapter Page

C. CONSENT FORM AND DATA SHEETS 85

D. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA 89

ABSTRACT 93

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Distribution of Sample	23
2.	Importance of Ranked Items	31
3.	Weekly Child Care Cost	35
4.	Response of Parents to Item 9	36
5.	Response of Parents to Item 11	36
6.	Relationship of Parent Cluster Items to Item Clusters	54
7.	Ranking of Items by Four Clusters of Parents	55

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Most Important and Least Important Items as Ranked by Single Parents . . .	33
2.	Clusters of Reasons	39
3.	Significant Items Ranked by Four Clusters of Parents	52

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

During recent years there has been a rapid increase in the numbers of families with only one parent as head-of-household and wage earner. While they are working, these parents must have child care for their children. The reasons behind single parents' choice of their child care arrangements have not been well established.

Background

In California, as elsewhere in the United States, increased divorces, desertions and illegitimate births have caused a steady rise in single parent families. Between 1948 and 1975, the percentage of single parent families has risen from 7% to 17% with the increase greatest among those with children under six years of age. Along with this increase of single parent families has come the decline of the extended family. According to the Advisory Committee on Child Development (National Academy of Sciences, 1976), 90% of all children in one parent families are living with

a head-of-household mother or father instead of with a grandmother or other family member.

In order to support themselves and their children, a majority of single parents have paid employment. Eighty percent of the single working mothers with children between three years and 17 years old, and 70% of the single working mothers with children under three years of age, have full-time jobs (National Academy of Sciences, 1976). However, working does not necessarily relieve financial problems. In 1975, two-thirds of all families with incomes below $4,000 had only one parent. Most of these families were headed by women. The median income for the single parent female-headed family was $3,891 compared to the single parent male-headed family which was $9,226. For single mothers under 25 years old, the economic situation was even more severe. They comprised one-third of all single mothers with children under six years of age and their median income was only $3,021.

In California, one-fourth of the families enrolled in State subsidized day care centers are single parent families (California State Department of Education, 1977a). Almost half of all the families in the centers had a family income below $550 per month.

The Problem

Increased numbers of single parents in the work force full-time and lack of anyone in the home to care for their children has created a demand for out-of-home child care facilities. Auerbach (1976) notes that in 1975 over six million school children fitted into the category of "latchkey children," a term used to describe children who leave for school after the parent has gone to work and arrive home in the afternoon before the parent returns. In another study, Auerbach-Fink (1973) reported that 90% of the mothers in the San Francisco, California, area needed out-of-home child care because of the lack of a friend, neighbor, spouse or relative who could care for the child regularly. According to the California State Department of Education (1977a), of the single parents who enrolled their children in the state subsidized day care centers, 67% indicated that they needed the care in order to work; 14% were in training; and 12% were going to school.

Although the demand for child care is present, the low incomes of most single parent families generally severely limits their choices. Facilities most

commonly selected are public day care centers which receive government money, and day care homes which gradually are being included in the subsidy programs. (In California, the State Legislature in 1976 established an alternative care program, AB 3059, which provides resource and referral service and subsidy payments to parents who use day care homes for their child care.) The Office of Child Development for the State of California estimated 50,562 children needed subsidized child care in the State and were not receiving it (California State Department of Education, 1977b).

Total enrollment at the 33 Children's Centers, subsidized public day care centers administered by the San Diego Unified School District, was 2,330 in April, 1978. The number of children on the waiting list at that time was 2,627. If all the children presently enrolled were to drop out, there still would not be room to accommodate all the children on the waiting list. The situation is similar with the day care homes. One of the groups funded under AB 3059 to aid parents who use day care homes was the Child Care Information Network of San Diego, Inc. (CIN). Since its inception in November 1976, the CIN program has

aided 378 families and as of April 1978, was serving 250 families or 350 children. In the meantime there are 800 families on the waiting list.

Purpose of the Study

Single parents are faced with difficult decisions about their child care arrangements because of the lack of available space in public day care centers and the limited space in day care homes. What do they consider when they select their child care arrangements? How do they choose between a public day care center versus a licensed family day care home? Are their reasons related to the services the child care arrangement provides the working parent or the optimal development of the child?

The purpose of this study is to obtain information about the reasons single parents in San Diego had for choosing either a public day care center or a licensed day care home for their children. This will provide additional information for local day care facilities which will enable them to better meet the needs of the single parents in the community.

The Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested:

1. Reasons single parents select child care arrangements do not differ on the dimension of child-orientation versus parent-orientation.

2. There is no relationship between the orientation of parents' reasons for selecting child care arrangements and the choice they make between public school day care centers and County licensed day care homes.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined for the purposes of this study.

Children's Center. A group day care facility for low income families administered by the San Diego Unified School District and financed through local and State funds, and parent fees. There are 33 Children's Centers located in the City of San Diego, ranging in size from approximately 19 children to 129 children. They provide care for preschool children through the sixth grade.

Licensed family day care home. Private homes which are licensed by the County of San Diego,

according to the State of California regulations, for the purpose of providing out-of-home child care. The homes are generally licensed for not more than six children at one time and can care for children of varying ages.

Q-sort. A technique used to prioritize or rank a group of items according to importance.

Single parent. Any person who has sole responsibility for raising his or her child.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies which have been conducted on parents' preferences and expectations of their child care arrangements have yielded contradictory results. Comparing results between studies has not been possible because all have used very different sample populations. Some were sponsored by special interest groups which were searching for information to support their viewpoints. Few have differentiated between single and married working parents but instead have tended to lump all parents under one heading. When collecting the data, the researchers generally did not ask the parents why they were using their present type of child care. They only asked the parents to give their preferences for various types of child care arrangements without exploring reasons for this stated preference.

National Day Care Study

The National Day Care Study, sponsored by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (Abt Associates, 1978), is due for final completion in 1978. It is the most current large-scale study concerning

child care arrangements, and primarily has been investigating the cost effects of center-based care for preschool children in the cities of Atlanta, Georgia, Detroit, Michigan, and Seattle, Washington. However, two substudies, a Supply Study and an Infant Day Care Study, were conducted concurrently. In the Infant Day Care Study, parents were asked their reasons for placing their infants and toddlers in day care centers rather than day care homes. The reasons that they gave for their choice of a day care center were (1) the adequacy and dependability of supervision, (2) the location and cost of the center, and (3) the developmental or educational nature of the program.

National Child Care Consumer Study

Another recent large-scale study (4,000 one-hour interviews) which considered parent practices and attitudes regarding child care was the National Child Care Consumer Study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976) sponsored by the Head Start Bureau of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families. However, the sample was not limited to users of child care. The only requirement to participate in the study was to have at least one child under 14 years

old. When asked why child care was needed, the most common response was that the person was working or looking for work.

The results of the survey indicated that 40% of the children were cared for in their own homes, 15% in other homes where the care-giver was not a relative and 2% in day care centers. When single parents were separated from the population, the results changed. The children of single employed parents were more than twice as likely to use center care than the children of a two-parent household where both parents were employed. In the sample 34% of the single parents preferred day care centers while 22% preferred another home or licensed day care home.

In regard to cost of child care, the single working women were paying a much greater proportion of their income than married working women. When controlling for employment status, the study found that single parents tended to pay more per week both on a per capita and on a mean cost basis. For child care in their own homes, the employed single mothers paid 50% more per week than the married mothers. Among unemployed mothers, single parents who paid for child

care in their own homes by relatives paid three times the mean cost of married unemployed mothers.

The survey also included data related to the factors considered when choosing child care. The respondents were asked to rank from 1 to 5 the seven major factors that entered into their decision for using their present child care arrangements. For those using a center or nursery school the factors in order of importance were: (1) well-trained staff, (2) warm and loving care-giver, (3) things are clean and safe, (4) child likes the type of care, and (5) planned/ supervised group play. No differentiation was made in the responses between single and married parents.

Expectations and Preferences

The studies which included parents' opinion regarding their child care arrangements asked them what they would "prefer or expect" or if they were "satisfied" with their present situation. They did not ask the parents to rank the factors which had entered into their decision as to "why" they placed their children in their present child care arrangements. The wording of the questions varied substantially across the studies. They were not comparable in terms of the type

of questions asked and the categories of responses. Frost and Schneider (1971) pointed out that when parents are asked to give their expectations or reasons for choosing and liking current child care arrangements, the answers are probably tied to features presently existing in the available child care arrangements. They felt that parents' preferences may be better indicators of what features parents would like for their children. They thought these could then be used across studies to compare the features various kinds of families want for their child care.

Auerbach-Fink (1973) interviewed 50 parents about their expectations for child care services in the San Francisco, California area. In the response to the question, "What do you expect from child care?" 92% replied they wanted the child to be safe from harm; 84% expected the child to be well-fed, and 82% wanted the child to be given individual attention. When asked if they were getting what they expected, 68% said "No." When asked what they would change in their present arrangement, the top five answers were: (1) more outdoor play, (2) center closer to home, (3) more individual attention for the child/smaller groups of

children, (4) more/better health services, and (5) more educational activities/preschool preparation.

Zamoff and Lyle (1973) found staff competence was consistently rated higher than nutritional and recreational components regardless of socioeconomic characteristics. Staff training and competence, and program quality were also considered important features in the day care programs by the respondents in the UEC, Inc. study (1972). As with the National Day Care Study (Abt Associates, 1978) the parents in the Zamoff and Lyle study (1973) said that they would be interested in exploring extrafamilial arrangements even for toddlers if such facilities became available and had competent staffs. They felt that a staff especially sensitive to the needs of very young children can compensate for the intimate and personalized care they expected for their children in familial arrangements. However, when asked how much they would alter this preference to meet costs, the constraints of staff competence were put aside for cleanliness, kindly treatment and safety. Westat-Westinghouse (1971) had similar basic custodial expectations listed for day care centers. Both groups of mothers in the Westat-Westinghouse study listed (1) good care, (2) safety, and (3) good food as

important reasons. The next most important features were behavior training and education. Fishaut (1973) also found that care-givers were the most important factor listed when choosing child care. Location was second, while program features received a very low rating.

In the preference for the type of child care arrangements, Ruderman (1968) found that considerable numbers in all racial and socioeconomic groups favored the day care center if it would provide: good quality care, convenience, dependability, opportunities for acquiring social learning and having fun and constructive play. Auerbach-Fink (1973) also reported that a substantial number of the San Francisco mothers in her study preferred a moderately-sized day care center which would be located near their homes. Smith and Reid (1973) found that the arrangements felt most satisfactory by mothers in the WIN program were child care centers, with care by the child's father given as second choice.

Willner (1969) also found a majority of the working mothers in New York City preferred day care centers over home care although most were using day care homes because they had been unable to enroll their

children in the centers. Among the stated reasons were long waiting lists, no centers located in their neighborhoods, and children of ages not serviced by the centers. Fewer than 50% said they had selected family day care as best for their child and wouldn't want to transfer them to a day care center if an opening became available. This study also found nothing to indicate that mothers preferred day care homes for children under two years of age because they supposedly offered an opportunity for individualized care. The other responses cited by the mothers were similar to those stated by the mothers in Ruderman's study (1968). Willner's mothers felt center care offered more than custodial care, whereas family day care homes provided more of a babysitting service without intellectual experiences.

Other studies have found a somewhat different emphasis on the factors that are important to mothers in choosing child care. Rowe (1972) found the three most important reasons were: (1) helping children get along better with each other, (2) closeness to home, and (3) provisions of health care. Ayers (1973) reported that parents thought a center should provide opportunities for children to play with others and also

develop school readiness. Prescott, Milich, and Jones (1972) reported that mothers whose children were currently enrolled in day care centers indicated the features they most liked about a center were: (1) excellent physical care, (2) training and education, and (3) social experiences with other children. In addition, Strand (1970) reported that mothers also gave such self-centered reasons for choosing their child care as convenience, personal attributes of the caregiver, quality care and economic factors.

In the UEC, Inc. study (1972) parents indicated they wanted input in planning services they wanted for themselves and their children. The direct services which the parents desired from their child care were: (1) provisions for receiving child development information, and (2) discussions with the teachers about their children's problems. Horner (1974) explored parental satisfaction and found that parents who used family day care showed less dissatisfaction with the arrangements than parents who used group day care. Also parental awareness of the problem was inversely related to parental dissatisfaction.

The research cited demonstrates the confusion which exists regarding parents' attitudes about child

care arrangements. The data for parent preferences have produced no overall significant results which can appropriately be applied to future research and planning.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The study was conducted in the City of San Diego, California, with single working parents who had preschool children in a day care center or day care home. The data were collected through the use of a Q-sort and statistically analyzed with a computer.

Instrument Development

In order to refine the procedures planned for the study, preliminary work was done at San Diego State University utilizing the Child Development Laboratory staff and parents, parents who had children enrolled at the Associated Students Day Care Center, and low income parents at an off-campus day care center. The subjects were asked to participate voluntarily. They varied in age, education and income.

Identifying the Reasons

The first step was to ask the parents to list their reasons for choosing their present child care arrangements (Appendix A). Thirty-two parents responded to the questionnaire. These reasons were

used as a basis to identify 30 possible reasons which might influence parents when choosing day care arrangements for their children. These reasons or items were categorized as either child-oriented reasons or parent-oriented reasons.

In order to eliminate any chance for ambiguity, the 30 items were next typed on 3 x 5 cards and the parents and staff were asked to sort them into two piles, one containing child-oriented reasons and the other parent-oriented reasons. By the time the procedure was repeated three times with a total of 45 different subjects, and modifying the items each time, most of the items were being placed consistently.

Q-Sort Cards and Board

A game-like board and cards were devised to aid the parents in sorting the cards and also in helping them see all the cards after they had been ranked. This enabled them to rearrange the cards before the ranking was recorded if they changed their minds.

The 30 items (Appendix A) were typed on beige-colored card weight paper. Each item was then cut into individual cards measuring 2" x 3" for a total of 30 cards. The cards were numbered on the back.

Next a 22" x 28" green poster board was divided into seven columns. Spaces the size of the Q-cards (2" x 3") were drawn in each column. The column distribution was: Column 1--2 cards; Column 2--4 cards; Column 3--6 cards; Column 4--6 cards; Column 5--6 cards; Column 6--4 cards; and Column 7--2 cards. Column 1 was assigned the ranking of Most Important and Column 7 was designated Least Important.

Data Collection

Fifty-three single parents participated in the study. The names were obtained through the cooperation of the San Diego Unified School District who administered the Children's Centers and day care providers whose homes were licensed by the County of San Diego. Thirty had preschool children in the Children's Centers and 23 had children in day care homes.

Children's Centers Sample

The Children's Centers sample was drawn first and used as a basis for determining a similar distribution for the day care homes sample. The Children's Centers assign each registered child a number for the purpose of financial classification. Each Center also

has an identifying number. A list of these numbers representing all the preschool children of single parents registered in the 33 Children's Centers was provided by the Children's Center office. The numbers on the list were numbered again sequentially. There was a total of 506 names. The names to be used in the study were selected through the use of the Table of Random Numbers. Sampling was done twice in order to obtain the predetermined sample number of 25. For the first sample 30 names were selected but only three were willing to participate. For the second sample 103 names were drawn and 27 agreed to participate in the study. All participants in both groups who indicated a willingness to be a part of the study were contacted.

After the numbers of the children were randomly drawn a letter and stamped self-addressed postcard were mailed to their parents (Appendix B). The envelopes for the letters were addressed by a clerk in the Children's Center office to maintain the privacy of the parents. The parents who wished to be a part of the study checked the appropriate space on the postcard and filled in their names and phone numbers. Upon receipt of the postcard a time and place was arranged by phone for them to complete the Q-sort.

The parents who responded to the letter represented 16 centers out of the total number of 33. These centers were located in 10 Zip Code areas of the City of San Diego (Table 1).

Licensed Day Care Homes Sample

The day care homes sample was selected after the Children's Centers sample was known. The County of San Diego prints a list of its licensed day care homes which are grouped by Zip Code number and the closest elementary school. Within each Zip Code area, one of the licensed day care providers is an area coordinator who is knowledgeable about all the day care providers in that area. When contacted by a parent who is looking for child care, she has the responsibility of finding the day care home in her area which best suits the parent's needs. Thus, in order to find single parents for the study in Zip Code areas which compared to the Children's Center sample, the area coordinator of the day care homes for each of the 10 Zip Code areas was contacted. Each of these coordinators in turn contacted day care providers in their areas to find out which ones had single parents who would be willing to assist in the study by giving each single parent a

Table 1

Distribution of Sample

	Children's Centers		Day care homes	
	Frequency		Frequency	
Zip code	Centers used	Parents	Providers used	Parents
92102	1	1	1	1
92103	1	1	1	1
92105	2	2	1	2
92109	3	3	1	2
92111	3	4	1	2
92113	1	1	1	1
92115	1	7	3	4
92116[a]	1	4	0	0
92104[a]	0	0	1	2
92117	2	6	3	7
92120	1	1	1	1
Total	16	30	14	23

[a]No day care homes were licensed by the County in the 92116 Zip Code area at the time of the study. Licensed day care homes in the adjoining Zip Code area, 92104, were utilized in their place.

letter and stamped self-addressed postcard. In the 92116 Zip Code area the County had no day care homes which were licensed. Samples were taken from the adjoining Zip Code area, 92104 (Table 1). In this additional Zip Code area single parents who were willing to participate in the study also were difficult to locate. Two more were sought to make the day care homes sample number equal to the Children's Center sample for the area but none could be found within the time limits of the study.

After the area coordinator reported back to the investigator, the letters and postcards were mailed directly to the day care provider. A hand-written cover letter (Appendix B) to suggest informality and friendliness was included to furnish the day care provider with additional information about the procedures of the study. Each provider approached the parents, told them about the study and gave them a letter and postcard. However, 11 of the 23 respondents gave the day care provider permission to give their names and phone numbers directly to the investigator without returning a postcard. When the names and phone numbers were received, appointments were made following the same procedures used for the Children's Center

parents. The parents in both groups determined the location and time for the Q-sort which was most convenient for them. Most suggested their home, although several preferred their place of employment. A case number was assigned to each parent in the study to maintain confidentiality.

The Q-Sort

Before beginning to sort and rank the 30 reasons for choosing their child care arrangements, the parents were asked to read and sign a consent form indicating their willingness to participate and signifying that they understood the study and its purpose (Appendix C).

Each parent was then handed the cards and asked to rank them according to those reasons most important to that individual parent at the time he or she was choosing a day care arrangement. The parent also was instructed to rank the reasons according to what was important regardless of the availability of the service.

When the parent completed sorting the cards, the rank given the Q-sort card was transferred to a tally sheet which had spaces numbered 1 to 30. In a

second column the subtotals for the 15 items which were child-oriented and the 15 items which were parent-oriented were computed (Appendix C).

Upon completion of the tallying of the cards, a demographic questionnaire was administered verbally. This provided data concerning yearly income, weekly child care cost, government support, sex of parent, age of parent, age and number of children living with the parent and ethnic background (Appendix C).

Data Processing

The data from the tally sheet and questionnaire were coded, punched on computer cards, and processed for frequency distribution and clustering. Mean rank scores were computed for the items. Differences between the responses of the Children's Center parents and day care parents as well as between four clusters of parents were analyzed for significance. The rank scores of the child-oriented items and parent-oriented items were subtotaled and also analyzed for significant differences between the Children's Center parents and day care home parents.

Frequency Distribution

The frequency with which the Children's Center parents and day care home parents placed an item in each of the seven columns of the Q-sort was counted. These ranks were totaled and a mean rank score computed for each item (Table 2, p. 31). A low mean rank indicated the item was important while a high mean rank indicated the item was unimportant.

The data were sorted into bivariate contingency tables for the parents' yearly income, weekly child care cost, government support, age, ethnic background, and age and number of children living with the parent; and for the parents' responses to the items. Each of these frequency distributions was analyzed for significant differences between the Children's Center parents and day care home parents using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (Siegel, 1956):

$$X^2 = 4D^2 \frac{n_1 \, n_2}{n_1 + n_2}$$

Child-Oriented Vs. Parent-Oriented Items

The null hypotheses (1) the reasons single parents select child care arrangements do not differ on the dimension of child-orientation versus parent-orientation, and (2) there is no relationship between

the orientation of parents' reasons for selecting child care arrangements and the choice they make between public school day care centers and County licensed day care homes were tested. The subtotals for the 15 items which were child-oriented and for the 15 items which were parent-oriented were analyzed for significant differences between the Children's Center parents and day care home parents using Student-Fisher t.

Clustering

The data were clustered two ways using a general distance formula. One analysis produced seven clusters of items with similar patterns of ranking. The other produced four clusters of parents based on the similarity of their ranking of the items. In addition, the ranking of the items by the four clusters of parents was sorted into bivariate contingency tables and analyzed for differences using the Chi-square statistic.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to single parents who have their children enrolled in the Children's Centers administered by the San Diego Unified School District and in day care homes licensed by the County of San

Diego. The sample of Children's Center parents had children six years old and younger and the day care home parents had children seven years old and younger using the day care facilities during the three-month period of January to March, 1978. The single parents from both types of facilities were recruited on a volunteer basis in order to fully protect their privacy. This could affect the generalization of the data to other populations. The Q-sort consisted of 30 items while 60 to 90 items are considered optimal (Stephenson, 1953).

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fifty-three single parents in San Diego, California, were asked to Q-sort 30 reasons for choosing a Children's Center administered by the San Diego Unified School District or a day care home licensed by the County of San Diego for their child care arrangements. A demographic questionnaire was administered verbally. Responses were tabulated and means for each item were calculated. Mean rank scores of child-oriented items and parent-oriented items were analyzed for significant differences. Differences in responses between the Children's Center parents and day care home parents were tested for significance. Cluster analyses were done for both items and parents. Differences between the responses of the parent clusters were also tested for significance.

Tabulation of Responses

A mean rank score was obtained for each item. Table 2 shows the frequency distribution and mean rank score for each item as ranked by all parents on a scale of 1 to 7. A rank of 1 was Most Important and a rank

Table 2

Importance of Ranked Items

Item	Frequency distribution							$\bar{X}$
	Most important						Least important	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	0	1	10	20	14	6	2	4.38
2	13	15	14	8	2	1	0	2.51
3	0	1	9	17	15	9	2	4.53
4	1	4	8	19	14	5	2	4.21
5	6	15	25	6	1	0	0	2.64
6	0	3	9	12	17	6	6	4.60
7	16	11	13	5	8	0	0	2.58
8	2	17	19	10	5	0	0	2.98
9[a]	14	5	5	13	12	4	0	3.30
10	1	6	20	16	10	0	0	3.53
11[a]	4	17	11	13	6	2	0	3.11
12	2	6	18	13	11	3	0	3.64
13	0	3	19	16	14	1	0	3.83
14	2	10	21	8	2	0	0	2.77
15	3	12	22	7	7	1	1	3.19
16	11	6	9	8	10	7	2	3.58
17	0	7	7	14	7	14	4	4.49
18	3	8	14	14	11	3	0	3.58
19	2	4	3	5	6	24	9	5.21
20	0	7	10	11	19	5	1	4.15
21	0	2	6	13	22	8	2	4.64
22	4	11	8	16	7	5	2	3.64
23	0	3	12	18	16	3	1	4.13
24	3	5	3	2	9	15	16	5.23
25	1	11	9	9	11	7	5	4.11
26	1	0	0	4	19	14	15	3.68
27	0	0	2	4	18	22	7	5.53
28	2	2	1	3	5	22	18	5.74
29	5	5	5	9	8	13	8	4.53
30	10	5	6	5	12	12	3	3.98

[a]Significantly different responses for Children's Center parents and licensed day care home parents, Table 4 and Table 5, p. 36.

of 7 was Least Important. A low total mean rank score indicated the item was considered more important while a high total mean score indicated the item was less important. The items with the lowest mean scores or the most important, in order, were: 2, 7, 5, 14 and 8. The items with the highest scores or the least important, in order, were: 21, 19, 24, 27 and 28 (Figure 1).

The two most important items were similar in that they dealt with the staff of the child care facility and with the children. Based on their ranking of the items the parents seemed to place great importance on a child care staff which not only like the children but communicate this feeling to the children and parents. They also want a program which provides the children with opportunities for well-rounded growth and development. However, the parents expected these to occur within the framework of an environment which is clean and safe.

The least important reasons were concerned with the parents. Each one appears to make a definitive statement about an aspect of the parents' relationship with the child care facility or about a factor which affected their decision-making process. Based on their

mean scores, however, none exerted much influence on the parents when they were choosing their child care arrangements.

Most Important Items:

2. The staff enjoys and understands the children.

7. The program activities are aimed at developing the social, physical and emotional growth of my child.

5. The environment of the facility is clean and safe.

14. The staff provides individualized attention.

8. The staff tries to aid in developing independence.

Least Important Items:

21. The facility provides opportunities for me to learn about children.

19. This was the only facility with space available when I had to start my job.

24. I don't want a babysitter in my home while I am working.

27. The facility provides opportunities for me to talk with other parents about my problems.

28. I selected this facility because my friend told me about it.

Figure 1

Most Important and Least Important Items as Ranked by Single Parents

Comparison of Children's Center Parents Vs. Licensed Day Care Home Parents

The data were sorted into bivariate contingency tables which summarized the demographic items (Appendix D) and the ranking of the Q-sort items by the Children's Center parents and day care home parents. When analyzed for significant differences between the two groups using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic, the weekly child care cost and the responses to items 9 and 11 were found to be significant at the .001 level. Differences between the two groups on the subtotals of the child-oriented items and parent-oriented items were analyzed using Student-Fisher t.

Weekly Child Care Cost

Table 3 shows that the cost of the child care was significantly less for Children's Center parents than for the day care home parents. However, this fact apparently did not influence the parents in their choice between a Children's Center and a day care home because item 16: "The facility has low fees," while in the top third of the mean rank scores did not have a statistically significant difference between the two groups of parents.

Table 3

Weekly Child Care Cost

Weekly child care cost (dollars)	Children's Centers[a]		Day care homes	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Nothing	21	70.0	3	45.3
1-15	9	30.0	2	20.8
16-25	0	0.0	9	17.0
26-35	0	0.0	5	9.4
Other	0	0.0	4	7.5

[a]Frequency distribution significantly different at the .001 level (Kolmogorov-Smirnov).

Responses to Items 9 and 11

Item 9: "The child care arrangement provides a home-like setting," was significantly more important to the parents who had chosen a licensed day care home. The opposite was true for item 11: "The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented," which was more important to the Children's Center parents (Table 4 and Table 5).

This would seem to indicate that the parents who had their children in a licensed family day care home had deliberately chosen that type of arrangement because they were looking for the home-like setting.

Table 4

Response of Parents to Item 9[a]

Parents	Q-sort columns							Total	$\bar{X}$
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Children's Center	4	0	2	11	9	4	0	30	4.10
Day care home	10	5	3	2	3	0	0	23	2.26

[a]Frequency distribution significantly different at the .001 level (Kolmogorov-Smirnov).

Table 5

Response of Parents to Item 11[a]

Parents	Q-sort columns							Total	$\bar{X}$
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Children's Center	3	13	10	2	2	0	0	30	2.57
Day care homes	1	4	1	11	4	2	0	23	3.83

[a]Frequency distribution significantly different at the .001 level (Kolmogorov-Smirnov).

This was re-enforced by many of the parents as they did the Q-sort.

Using the same reasoning as for item 9, the Children's Center parents chose a Children's Center because they were interested in the intellectual development of their children above all the other items. This result agrees with the preferences expressed by the mothers in Willner's study (1969).

Parent-Oriented Vs.
Child-Oriented Items

The subtotals of the ranking by the single parents of the child-oriented items and parent-oriented items were analyzed for significant differences using Student-Fisher t. No significant differences were found between the Children's Center parents and day care home parents and their ranking of the child-oriented and parent-oriented items.

The items which parents ranked as Very Important or Least Important seemed to depend on each single parent's situation at the time the choice was being made. This lack of unity in responses is reported in much of the research literature dealing with working parents and accounts for some of the difficulty in

being able to draw meaningful conclusions across studies.

Clustering of Items

Using a generalized distance formula the items were placed into clusters. Based on the error measurement, seven clusters were chosen as the best solution. Figure 2 summarizes the clusters and sub-clusters.

Cluster 1: Reasons of Formal Education

Cluster 1 contains the items which were ranked most important. These items primarily focus on the concepts of formal education. The cluster subdivides into two sections: child-centered items and staff/program-centered items. Within the child-centered sub-cluster three items, 7: "The program activities are aimed at developing the social, physical and emotional growth of my child," 8: "The staff tries to aid the child in developing independence," and 14: "The staff provides individualized attention" were more nearly alike while two items, 2: "The staff enjoys and understands the children," and 5: "The environment of the facility is clean and safe" were similar. These were the same five items that were ranked as most important

Cluster 1: Reasons of Formal Education (Mean = 2.93)

Sub-Cluster 1a: Child-Centered Reasons (Mean = 2.70)

2. The staff enjoys and understands the children.
5. The environment of the facility is clean and safe.
7. The program activities are aimed at developing the social, physical and emotional growth of my child.
8. The staff tries to aid the child in developing independence.
14. The staff provides individualized attention.

Sub-Cluster 1b: Staff/Program-Centered Reasons (Mean = 3.31)

11. The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented.
12. The facility has a good number of staff per child.
15. The facility has a well-trained staff.

Cluster 2: Reasons of Practicality (Mean = 3.70)

16. The facility has low fees.
18. The facility utilizes flexible scheduling of its hours.
22. The facility is near my home.
30. I had no one at home to take care of my child.

Figure 2

Clusters of Reasons

Cluster 3: Reasons of Home-Extension (Mean = 3.71)

9. The child care arrangements provide a home-like setting for my child.
25. The facility can take care of my child when he is sick.

Cluster 4: Reasons of Informal Education (Mean = 4.28)

Sub-Cluster 4a: Child-Centered Reasons (Mean = 4.16)

1. The facility plans its programs around what the children want to do.
6. The facility offers my child free playtime without planned activities.
10. The facility provided an opportunity for group play.
13. The facility has a large outdoor play area.
20. The facility saves me time and expense by providing meals.
23. The personnel at the center are friendly to me.

Sub-Cluster 4b: Staff/Program-Centered Reasons (Mean = 4.47)

3. The facility uses community resources at school and away from school.
4. The program includes appropriate cultural activities.
21. The facility provides opportunities for me to learn about children.

Sub-Cluster 4c: Location (Mean = 4.49)

17. The facility is close to my place of employment.

Figure 2 (continued)

Cluster 5: Reasons of Sociability (Mean = 4.49)

Sub-Cluster 5a: Social Reasons (Mean = 4.98)

26. The facility provides me a chance to meet other parents socially.

27. The facility provides opportunities for me to talk with other parents about my problems.

28. I selected this facility because my friend told me about it.

Sub-Cluster 5b: Timing (Mean = 5.21)

19. This was the only facility with space available when I had to start my job.

Cluster 6: (Mean = 5.23)

24. I don't want a babysitter in my home while I am working.

Cluster 7: (Mean = 4.53)

29. All my children can be cared for at the same facility.

Figure 2 (continued)

by the parents based on their mean rank scores (Figure 1, p. 33). The items in the staff/program-centered sub-cluster were all similar.

The two sub-clusters formed define the concept of formal education. The first sub-cluster was concerned with the aspects of the program which dealt with the child's needs. These included the staff enjoying and understanding the child and the environment of the facility being clean and safe. These reasons agree with the main preferences cited by the parents in studies done by Auerbach-Fink (1973), Fishaut (1973), U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1976), and Westat-Westinghouse (1971). The staff/program items in the second sub-cluster were also preferences named by the parents in the studies. In the National Child Care Consumer Study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976), the factor ranked number one in the selection of a center or nursery school was a well-trained staff. In fact all the studies described in the review of literature included a well-trained and competent staff as one of the higher priorities in influencing a parent's choice of child care arrangements. The other four factors which ranked high in the National Child Care Consumer Study were similar to the

other items in this cluster. The ranking together of all items which deal with formal education seems to indicate that this is the most important factor single parents are looking for when choosing their child care arrangements. Item 11: "The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented," which appears in this cluster was the most important item for the parents who had placed their children in the Children's Centers where this type of program is available. The parents want a day care facility to provide some type of structured environment and yet at the same time focus on the needs of the child and provide a well-trained competent staff to fulfill those needs.

Cluster 2: Reasons of Practicality

Cluster 2 deals with items which aid the parents and make dealing with child care more practical for them. Item 18: "The facility utilizes flexible scheduling of its hours," and item 22: "The facility is near my home," show the greatest similarity in this group and form the core of the cluster. Item 16 which deals with the cost of child care becomes more important in this cluster when coupled with item 30: "I had no one at home to take care of my child."

Strand (1970) also reported that mothers in his study mentioned convenience and economic factors when naming the reasons for their choice of child care. The items in this cluster emphasize the importance single parents place on some type of support system for themselves as well as their children in their child care arrangements.

Cluster 3: Reasons of Home-Extension

The third cluster is concerned with tasks which relate to the parent and child in the home. While ranked third, a mean rank of 3.71 with only a difference of .01 from Cluster 2 means this cluster was considered by the single parents to be almost as important as the items in Cluster 2. This cluster contained item 9: "The child care arrangements provide a home-like setting for my child," which was ranked the most important by the parents who chose to place their children in day care homes.

Although facilities generally have no provision for children when they are sick, this factor has been mentioned as being important by mothers in other studies. In the UEC, Inc. study (1972) medical services were the number one request for direct services to the

child. Angrist, Lave, and Michelin (1976) reported that 60% of the mothers in both study groups altered their routine when a child was sick. They were forced to stay home or take the child to a friend or neighbor. Auerbach-Fink (1973) in her findings reported:

> Employers differ greatly in their willingness to allow mothers time off without undue penalty to care for the needs of their children. More than a third of the mothers surveyed reported that they could not take time off from work to take care of a sick child without fear of some subtle reprisal. Nine percent said they could take time off only in the event of an emergency. (p. 26)

One of the parents in this study who was the mother of twins said that she had depleted all her own sick leave within a three-week period and was concerned about what she would do for the remainder of the year if she or the children were to get sick. The closed Q-sort required the parents to rank all the items in the study and most while ranking item 25: "The facility can take care of my child when he is sick," commented about the need for a place to take a moderately sick child and how none was available in San Diego.

Cluster 4: Reasons of Informal Education

Cluster 4 deals with the aspect of informal education. In Sub-cluster 4a, which again has an

emphasis on child-oriented reasons, items were grouped which are heavily play related. In particular item 6: "The facility offers my child free playtime without planned activities"; item 10: "The facility provided an opportunity for group play"; and item 13: "The facility has a large outdoor play area" are strongly related to instructional play and, therefore, to each other. Item 1: "The facility plans its programs around what the children want to do"; item 20: "The facility saves me time and expense by providing meals"; and item 23: "The personnel at the center are friendly to me" are more closely aligned within the sub-cluster and deal with services the facility offers the children. Sub-cluster 4b has items which relate well to each other regarding the function of the staff and program and informal educational matters. The last item in the cluster, 17, joined the cluster late in the clustering process resulting in its forming its own sub-cluster: "Location."

According to studies by Ayers (1973) and Ruderman (1968), the opportunities for play and other activities were mentioned by mothers as reasons for specifically preferring day care centers. Planned supervised group play was ranked number five by

respondents in the National Child Care Consumer Study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976). Early childhood educators have long known that play contributes to all types of learning including social, cognitive, physical and emotional learning (Sponseller, 1974). By their ranking of these items, the parents too, seemed to recognize that children must have an opportunity to have time to themselves to investigate and explore their own interests and to develop a self-identity. The other segment of this sub-cluster deals with items which will help the child feel comfortable and happy in the child care arrangement. The three items 1, 20 and 23 can be found in both Children's Center and day care homes. A facility which provides these items is probably enhancing the chances of the single parent choosing that individual day care arrangement over another one but the items are not among the first reasons the parent considers.

Sub-cluster 4b has items which are directed to the program/staff component in the broader sense. The clustering of these items suggests that the parents would like the curriculum to include community resources and to incorporate the study of the children's ethnic heritage and principles of child development into the

program. The mean scores of these items (4.47) seemed to indicate that the parents felt the items might be nice to include in the program but they had little to do with influencing their choice of child care.

In the last sub-cluster of this grouping is item 17: "The facility is close to my place of employment." Item 22: "The facility is near my home" fitted into the second cluster. The ranking of item 17 alone and as the last sub-cluster of Cluster 4 compared to the placement of item 22 in Cluster 2 indicates that parents want the day care facility to be closer to their home than to their place of work. Auerbach-Fink (1973) also found three-fifths of the mothers in her study preferred the child care arrangement to be located outside their homes, but near them. One-fifth preferred the child care to be near their place of work.

Cluster 5: Reasons of Sociability

The items in this last cluster were all related only to the parents' involvement in child care and subdivided into two clusters, social reasons and timing. The three items which clustered around social reasons involving the parents were strongly similar.

All the items in the cluster had high mean rank scores of close to 5 indicating the parents did not consider them to be particularly important. Again item 19: "This was the only facility with space available when I had to start my job," joined the cluster far enough along in the grouping to be considered its own sub-cluster. It dealt with job timing and space availability.

The position of the items in this cluster would seem to indicate that in the area of personal and social needs there is little or no expectations that those needs will be fulfilled by the day care facility through association with other parents who utilized the same day care arrangements. In the studies asking the parents about their preferences and expectations of child care facilities none mentioned parent involvement from the viewpoint of meeting the parents' social needs. The other item in this group seemed to suggest there was little reliance on the advice of friends when choosing their child arrangements. The parents seemed to be independent and basing their choice on their personal situation at the time.

The sub-cluster composed of item 19 meshes with the other items in the group in that it directly

involves the parents and suggests the potential of developing social contacts through starting a job. The mean rank of this item is quite high (5.21) indicating that the parents ranked it one of the least important of the 30 reasons. Even with all the difficulties most single parents generally are encountering, they apparently tend not to choose "just any old place" for their child care arrangements. They are taking the time to investigate their options.

Cluster 6 and Cluster 7

While the remaining two items were labeled clusters they really are still independent cells and had not yet clustered into any group. This means that item 29: "All my children can be cared for at the same facility" and item 24: "I don't want a babysitter in my home while I am working" can be considered unrelated to the other five clusters or to each other.

Parent Clustering and Comparison of Responses

In addition to clustering by items the data were grouped into four parent clusters based on the parents' ranking of the items. Bivariate contingency tables were constructed showing the ranking of each of the

items by the four clusters of parents. Differences in item response were tested using the Chi-square statistic.

Parent Clustering

No clear profile seemed to emerge from the clustering of the parents by the way they ranked the items. This pinpoints the difficulties of trying to categorize single parents. While single parents tend to share many common problems, these apparently do not overshadow their individuality.

Comparison of Responses

Figure 3 shows the 10 items in order of mean rank score which had significant differences when ranked by the four clusters of parents. When compared with the item clusters, item 11: "The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented," and item 15: "The facility has a well-trained staff" were in the formal education cluster and the staff/program subcluster. The next three items, 16: "The facility has low fees"; 22: "The facility is near my home"; and 30: "I had no one at home to take care of my child" are in the practicality cluster which had no subcluster. Item 4: "The program includes appropriate

cultural activities" was in the informal education cluster and staff/program sub-cluster. Item 19: "This was the only facility with space available when I had to start my job" fell into the home-extension cluster which had no sub-cluster. The last two items, 29: "All my children can be cared for at the same facility"; and 24: "I don't want a babysitter in my home while I am working" were items which remained independent and did not cluster.

Significant items: (in order of mean rank scores)

11. The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented.
15. The facility has a well-trained staff.
16. The facility has low fees.
22. The facility is near my home.
30. I had no one at home to take care of my child.
25. The facility can take care of my child when he is sick.
4. The program includes appropriate cultural activities.
19. This was the only facility with space available when I had to start my job.
29. All my children can be cared for at the same facility
24. I don't want a babysitter in my home while I am working.

Figure 3

Significant Items Ranked by Four Clusters of Parents

As Table 6 indicates the items which showed significant differences between the four parent clusters were those which had clustered in the item cluster and were ranked as most important. Items 11, 15 and 4 were concerned with education and particularly with the staff and program. Item 11 was one of the items which had also shown significant differences between the Children's Center parents and day care home parents and continues to be important when compared by the parents as a whole group. This emphasized again as in previous studies and in this study that parents are interested in an educational program which has a capable staff.

Another three items, 16, 22, 30, were found in the cluster labeled practicality. These are items which revolve around the parents as do items 29 and 24 even though they did not fit into any cluster during the item clustering. Item 19: "This was the only facility with space available when I had to start my job" relates to the decisions which were made based on the individual parents' circumstances at a particular point in time. The parents in the study have again indicated that certain types of services which aid them are important as well as the services which are provided their children.

Table 6

Relationship of Parent Cluster Items to Item Clusters

Parent clusters	Item clusters	
Significant item (in order of mean rank score)	Cluster	Sub-cluster
11	Formal Education	Staff/program
15	Formal Education	Staff/program
16	Practicality	None
22	Practicality	None
30	Practicality	None
4	Informal Education	Staff/program
19	Sociability	Timing
29[a]	None	None
24[a]	None	None

[a]Item did not cluster during clustering of items.

However, in analyzing each of the items for a trend in similarity between the four groups, none seemed to emerge (Table 7). Again the individuality of the parents surfaces as it did when previously clustered into parent groups. Group 3 had ranked the greatest number of items but showed little similarity to any other group in their ranking. Group 4 had ranked the second greatest number of items but only ranked item 25: "The facility can take care of my child when he is sick" the same as Group 3. The other items were ranked the opposite of Group 3. Overall, Group 3 and Group 4 appear to be most unlike each other and the other two groups.

Table 7

Ranking of Items by Four Clusters of Parents

Item	Group			
	1	2	3	4
11			Low	
15			Low	
16				Low
22	High	Low	High	Low
30				Low
25			High	High
4			Low	
19	Low	High	High	Low
29		High		
24			High	

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The increased number of single parents in the job market has resulted in an increased demand for child care facilities such as the public school centers and family day care homes. The reasons which might influence the single parents when choosing their child care were delineated and studied.

The Problem

An increase in single parent families has been caused by an increase in divorce and illegitimate births. This change in the family structure along with the decline of the supports available through the extended family has created a demand for out-of-home child care. The single parents are often limited in their choices of day care available to them because of low incomes or jobs with irregular hours.

Two types of day care facilities commonly used by single parents are day care centers and family day care homes. What influences parents to choose one type

of facility? Do the reasons differ on the dimension of child orientation versus parent orientation? Is there a relationship between the orientation of the parents' reasons and the choice they make between a day care center and a family day care home? In order to obtain information regarding these questions, single parents were contacted and asked to rank the reasons which influenced their selections.

The Method

In San Diego, California, 30 single parents who had preschool children enrolled in Children's Centers administered by the San Diego Unified School District, and 23 parents who had children in family day care homes licensed by the County of San Diego were randomly selected to participate in the study. Each parent was sent a letter explaining the purpose of the study along with a self-addressed stamped postcard (Appendix B). The initial contact with the parents was completed by personnel from the school district or day care home to protect the privacy of the parents. After receiving the letter the parents indicated their willingness to participate in the study by returning the postcard giving their names and phone numbers.

Arrangements were then made by telephone for the respondents to complete the Q-sort and answer a short questionnaire (Appendix C).

After signing a consent form (Appendix C), a closed Q-sort was executed by each of the single parents. Thirty predetermined reasons for choosing child care were printed on 2" x 3" cards. The parent was asked to rank them by placing them on a poster board which had seven columns. Column one was Most Important and column seven was Least Important. A normal curve was formed when all cards were in place. After the Q-sort was completed, the ranking was transferred to a tally sheet and the questionnaire was administered verbally.

The responses from the tally sheet and questionnaire were coded, punched on computer cards and processed for clustering by items and responses of the single parents. Mean rank scores were computed for the items (Table 2, p. 31). Bivariate contingency tables were constructed for ranking of the items by Children's Center parents and day care home parents, and by the four clusters of parents. The differences were analyzed for significance using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic and Chi-square. The items on the tally sheet

had been arranged in two categories--child-oriented and parent-oriented (Appendix C). A subtotal of the rank scores was computed for each category and analyzed for significant differences using Student-Fisher t.

The Findings

Few previous research studies have actually dealt with the decisions parents have made regarding their child care arrangements. Most have only inquired about preferences as part of a larger problem. However, two recent studies, the National Day Care Study (Abt Associates, 1978) and the National Child Care Consumer Study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976), did ask parents why they placed their children in a day care center. The parents in both studies essentially named the same items: (1) well-trained staff, (2) warm and loving care-giver, (3) things are clean and safe, (4) child likes the type of care, and (5) planned/supervised group play.

The data in this study also support the items mentioned in the National Child Care Consumer Study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976). Based on mean rank scores, the most important item was number 2: "The staff enjoys and understands

the child." Item 28: "I selected this facility because my friend told me about it" was considered the least important (Figure 1, p. 33).

When the items were analyzed for differences between the Children's Center parents and day care home parents, only two items, 9: "The child care arrangements provide a home-like setting for my child" and 11: "The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented," were found significant at the .001 level (Table 4 and Table 5, p. 36). The day care home parents favored item 9 and the Children's Center parents wanted item 11 as part of their child care arrangements. In the demographic data, the cost of weekly child care also showed significant differences at the .001 level between the two groups (Table 3, p. 35). The parents who chose day care homes paid more for their child care than the parents who used Children's Centers.

The data were clustered by items into seven clusters using a generalized distance formula (Figure 2, p. 39). Cluster 1 contained the items which were ranked most important, and dealt with reasons pertaining to formal education. The cluster, however, subdivided into two areas which revolved about child and staff/program components. Item 11: "The facility

plans activities which are educationally oriented" clustered in the staff/program component of Cluster 1. Cluster 2 had items which aid the parents and make dealing with out-of-home child care easier for them. The third cluster was ranked almost as important as Cluster 2 and is concerned with the needs of both the parents and children. Item 9: "The child care arrangements provide a home-like setting for my child" was in this cluster. Cluster 4 was a large cluster which also had subdivided and involved items concerning play, staff/program and the location of the child care facility. Cluster 5 had items which were ranked least important and dealt with the parents. It divided into clusters of social reasons and timing. Cluster 6 and Cluster 7 had not combined at this point in the clustering process with any other item. They were considered unrelated to each other or to the other five clusters.

In addition to the item cluster, the data were again clustered by parents' ranking of the items. Four clusters were formed. No descriptive information evolved from the parent clusters. Each of the parent clusters was composed of individual characteristics which could not be generalized to another cluster.

When the differences in responses were analyzed for significance between the four clusters, 10 items were found to be significant (Figure 3, p. 52). A comparison of the ranking of the 10 items between the four clusters also failed to show much similarity. When compared with all the clusters, Cluster 3 appeared to be the most unlike Cluster 4 (Table 7, p. 55).

Conclusions

In order to investigate the theories that parents choose their child care arrangements for reasons which are either child-oriented or parent-oriented and that these, in turn, influenced their choice between a Children's Center and family day care home, two hypotheses were developed and tested. The data were analyzed statistically and by clustering. Other data in the study also were analyzed and conclusions made.

Hypothesis #1

The first hypothesis tested was: Reasons single parents select child care arrangements do not differ on the dimension of child-orientation versus parent-orientation.

The clustering of the items into seven clusters resulted in general homogeneity developing among the items in each cluster. This homogeneity, however, was not concerned with child-oriented items or parent-oriented items. Instead it dealt with the generalized components found in most out-of-home day care situations. An analysis of the item clusters suggests that single parents are choosing their child care arrangements first for formal education for their children; second for features of practicality for themselves; third for home-extension-like situations; fourth for an environment which provides informal education for the children; and fifth and least important, opportunities for socialization for themselves. These results caused hypothesis #1 not to be rejected.

However, within two main clusters, two sub-clusters which contained child-centered reasons and program/staff-centered reasons were formed. In addition, individual items tended to cluster with other individual items which also were related to the child or parent. Cluster 1 was composed entirely of child-centered items and Clusters 2 and 5 were parent-centered items (Figure 2, p. 39). The other two clusters had items from both categories. The way in

which these items all tended to fall within one cluster or sub-cluster, suggests that an unconscious secondary influence was being exerted on the single parents to choose a child care facility which met the needs of both the parents and children.

Hypothesis #2

The second hypothesis tested was: There is no relationship between the orientation of parents' reasons for selecting child care arrangements and the choice they make between public school day care centers and county licensed day care homes.

The items had been grouped by child-oriented items and parent-oriented items on the tally sheet. The mean rank scores for each category were subtotaled and were analyzed for significant differences using Student-Fisher t. Since none were found to be significant, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Thus, parent-oriented reasons and child-oriented reasons are not important to single parents when they are choosing either a Children's Center or day care home for their child care arrangements.

General Conclusions

The various methods of analysis employed in the study all supported the same general conclusions. Three emerged as being important.

The items ranked most important based on mean rank scores and those found in Cluster 1 were the same items (Figure 1, p. 33, and Figure 2, p. 39). These items dealt with providing a structured situation for the children and having a staff which likes and understands the children. Parents who chose Children's Centers for their day care arrangements also ranked the item 11: "The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented" as being important. This same item appeared again when responses by the four clusters of parents were compared. Item 15: "The facility has a well-trained staff" also was considered important by the parent clusters.

Throughout the study the data have consistently shown that single parents have chosen a day care facility which they felt: (1) provided an academic learning environment for their children, (2) had a well-trained staff who obviously liked children and were friendly, and (3) had a clean and safe environment.

These conditions were more important than any others including cost.

On a secondary level but closely related in importance to the above items was a need for the child care arrangements to provide supportive services for the parents. Cluster 2 (Figure 2, p. 39) was composed of these items. The responses of the four parent clusters also emphasized this. Seven out of the 10 items, which were found significant between the responses of the four parent clusters, were directly related to parents. Single parents indicated they want their day care arrangements to: (1) be near their home, (2) take care of their children when they are sick, (3) have low fees, and (4) have flexible hours. These services are necessary in order for them to function in the role of parent and breadwinner for the family.

Another general area of concern for the single parents are the items found in Cluster 4 (Figure 2, p. 39). The education, child-centered and parent/staff-centered components are again present but are more diverse and less structured. The parents indicated they wanted their children to have the opportunity, and the place to play. They are still putting a high

priority on the concept of education but also recognized that learning occurs out of the classroom as well. Thus, parents want the day care facility to provide a variety of experiences for their children--not only a formal classroom situation.

Some of the other items the parents ranked dealt with social experiences for themselves. Again the methods of analysis consistently showed these items as being least important. They were ranked last based on their mean rank scores and also when clustered by items. They were not included in the items which had significant differences between Children's Center parents and day care home parents and between the parent clusters. The possibility of the day care facility providing social contacts was not important to the parents and was not a factor in choosing day care.

Recommendations

The results and conclusions of this study suggest some broad implications for providers of day care especially those involved with day care centers and family day care homes in the City of San Diego, California. These implications are based on the parents in this study having to evaluate their day care

arrangements within the framework of what was really important to them as single parents. Thus, the results of the study are based not on what decisions single parents might make but on the decisions they had actually made.

Practical Applications

Throughout the study the parent sample presented a picture of individuality and diversity. The clustering of the parents based on their responses produced no similar characteristics about parents included in the sample. The ranking of the items by the four clusters also emphasized how unlike each other the parent clusters were. Perhaps the time has come to re-evaluate the myth that it is the poor mother on welfare who is the prime user of day care. Day care today is apparently being utilized by parents from all socioeconomic levels. To meet the needs of this wide range of day care consumers, an effort should be made by all day care providers to insure that their philosophies and policies encompass elements of the philosophies of all the parents and their children at their facilities.

In addition each day care facility also has a responsibility to its single parents. The study has

indicated that parents want support services for themselves as well as child care from their day care arrangements. These support services will obviously vary from group to group and from day care facility to day care facility. In order to provide these services for their single parents, each facility periodically should assess the needs of the parents and then modify their program, when possible, to meet these needs. The one need mentioned by all the parents in the study was a place to take their children when they were sick and the parents were working. As the use of out-of-home day care increases the pressures for a solution to this problem undoubtedly will increase.

In general, then, a day care facility utilized by single parents should be capable of providing both a formal and an informal educational program for the children, have a competent, friendly staff to teach the program and provide some out-of-home support services for the parents.

Further Research

The Q-sort technique proved to be an effective way to collect the data for this study. Further research with single parents could replicate the

methods used in this study but with different variables such as:

1. Ethnic differences;
2. Income levels;
3. Educational level of the parents;
4. Age of the parents;
5. Sex (male head-of-household versus female head-of-household);
6. Previous marital status (divorced, widowed or never married);
7. Number of children in the home;
8. Differences in the ages of the children;
9. Length of time the parents have been single;
10. Type of program (free-play versus structured);
11. Cost of child care;
12. Other types of day care arrangements such as proprietary or church nursery school, etc.

In addition, repeating the present study and testing the reasons for choosing child care which resulted from the clustering of the items would provide solid data as to what influences single parents when

choosing between a Children's Center or a licensed family day care home for their child care arrangements.

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APPENDIX A

Q-SORT ITEMS

September 30, 1977

I am a Graduate student in Child Development and am doing a survey on the reasons people put their child in various types of child care.

I would appreciate your briefly listing below the things you were looking for in choosing child care. Do not sign your name.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Please return this to the Associated Students' Child Care Center by Wednesday, October 5.

Thank you very much for your time. We will share the results with you.

Maria S. Rothschild

Q-Sort Items

Child-Oriented

1. The facility plans its program around what the children want to do.
2. The staff enjoys and understands the children.
3. The facility uses community resources at school and away from school.
4. The program includes appropriate cultural activities.
5. The environment of the facility is clean and safe.
6. The facility offers my child free play-time without planned activities.
7. The program activities are aimed at developing the social, physical and emotional growth of my child.
8. The staff tries to aid the child in developing independence.
9. The child care arrangement provides a home-like setting for my child.

Parent-Oriented

16. The facility has low fees.
17. The facility is close to my place of employment.
18. The facility utilizes flexible scheduling of its hours.
19. This was the only facility with space available when I had to start my job.
20. The facility saves me time and expense by providing meals.
21. The facility provides opportunities for me to learn about children.
22. The facility is near my home.
23. The personnel at the facility are friendly to me.
24. I don't want a baby-sitter in my home while I am working.
25. The facility can take care of my child when he/she is sick.
26. The facility provides me a chance to meet other parents socially.

Child-Oriented

10. The facility provides an opportunity for group play.

11. The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented.

12. The facility has a good number of staff per child.

13. The facility has a large outdoor play area.

14. The staff provides individualized attention.

15. The facility has a well-trained staff.

Parent-Oriented

27. The facility provides opportunities for me to talk with other parents about my problems.

28. I selected this facility because my friend told me about it.

29. All my children can be cared for at the same facility.

30. I had no one at home to take care of my child.

LETTERS

Dear Parent,

Your name has been randomly selected to participate in a study to determine how single working parents choose day care for their children. All individual answers to the survey will be kept strictly confidential. However, a summary will be made available to persons who are involved in child care arrangements in San Diego. The information may help them to understand more clearly the needs of single working parents with preschool children.

This study is part of my program for a Master's degree in Child Development from San Diego State University. It is being conducted under the guidance of my graduate committee, Professors Dorothy Hewes, Thair Milne and Monroe Rowland. My own background includes a degree in Home Economics Education from The Pennsylvania State University with additional graduate work in Foods and Agricultural Marketing at Cornell University. I have taught locally at Grossmont Community College and in the San Diego City Schools. I, too, am a single working parent.

Please tell me if you are willing to participate in the study by completing the enclosed card and dropping it in the mail. If you agree, I will contact you by phone to arrange the time and place for an interview. It will take approximately a half hour and will involve your sorting cards with statements for choosing child care arrangements into seven piles according to your opinion of their importance, and answering seven short questions. Your cooperation in the study will be deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Maria S. Rothschild

Enc.

Dear Mrs. Rothschild,

_____ Yes, I will participate in your study.

_____ No, I am not interested in participating in your study.

Sincerely,

_____

Phone # _____

Date

Dear _____

Enclosed are the letters and self-addressed postcards for you to give to your single parents. After they return the postcards to me with their names and phone numbers, I will contact them by phone to arrange a time for them to participate in the study.

I truly appreciate your willingness to help me with my research. Please feel free to call me at 459-7526, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Maria S. Rothschild

[Original letter was handwritten.]

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM AND DATA SHEETS

No. _____

CONSENT FORM

I am willing to be interviewed by Mrs. Maria S. Rothschild as part of the research being conducted by her on the child care arrangements chosen by single working parents. I understand the interview will require about a half hour and will ask me to rank by sorting cards my reasons for choosing my present child care arrangements. I also understand this research is being undertaken as part of Mrs. Rothschild's program for a Master's degree in Child Development from San Diego State University. I am aware the results of the study will be summarized and made available to the University and other agencies who assist parents with their child care arrangements.

I understand, however, that any of the answers to the questions which relate directly to me and my family will be treated with complete confidentiality and would be disclosed only with my permission. I feel satisfied my questions have been answered and I know I can contact Mrs. Rothschild personally if I have any further questions.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW AFTER HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

_____ _____

Date Signature

_____

Investigator

459-7526

Phone # of Investigator

No. _____

Q-SORT TALLY SHEET

Item No.	Rank in Importance	Item Subtotal
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
	Total	

No. _____

Sex _____

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your yearly income?

   a. $0 to $4,999
   b. $5,000 to $9,999
   c. $10,000 to $14,999
   d. $15,000 to $19,999
   e. $20,000 or more

2. How much per week does your child care cost?

   a. Nothing
   b. $0 to $15
   c. $16 to $25
   d. $26 to $35
   e. Other _____

3. Do you receive any government money to help pay for child care costs?

   Yes _____ No _____

   a. Source? _____

   b. Amount? _____

4. How old are you?

   a. Under 20 years
   b. 20 to 25 years
   c. 26 to 30 years
   d. 31 to 35 years
   e. 36 years or older

5. How many children do you have living with you? ____

6. What are their ages? ____ ____ ____ ____

7. What is their ethnic background? _____

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

	Percent
Sex of Single Parents	
Female	92
Male	8
Age of Single Parents (Years)	
Under 20	4
20-25	26
26-30	49
31-35	8
36 or older	13
Income (Dollars per Year)	
0-4,999	26
5,000-9,999	54
10,000-14,999	13
15,999-19,999	5
Ethnic Background	
Caucasian	62
Black	15
Mexican-American	8
Oriental	6
Other	9

	Percent
Number of Children Living at Home	
One	60
Two	22
Three	17
Age of Children	
Under 1	2
1-2	2
2-3	5
3-4	20
4-5	24
5-6	18
6-7	5
7-8	10
8-9	2
9-10	5
10-11	4
14-15	1
20-21	1

	Percent
Parents Receiving Subsidies (Dollars Per Month)*	
0-150	38
151-200	6
201-250	13
251-300	19
301-350	13
351-400	6
401-451	6

*Percent based on a total of 16 parents receiving subsidies.

ABSTRACT

Single parent families that have one parent as head-of-household and full-time wage earner are increasing through increases in divorce and illegitimate births. These changes, along with the decline in the extended family, have caused a demand for out-of-home child care while the single parents are working. Public school centers and licensed family homes are two child care facilities frequently used by single parents. The reasons which cause single parents to select either facility for their child care are not well-known.

In San Diego, California, 30 single parents who had preschool children enrolled in Children's Centers administered by the San Diego Unified School District, and 23 single parents who used County licensed family day care homes were randomly sampled. Two hypotheses were tested by use of a Q-sort which required single parents to rank reasons for choosing child care. A demographic questionnaire also was administered verbally. The data were processed by frequency distribution and clustering, and analyzed for significant differences using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic, Chi-square and Student-Fisher t.

Mean rank scores showed the most important item of the 30 was item 2: "The staff enjoys and understands the child." Item 9: "The child care arrangements provide a home-like setting for my child"; item 11: "The facility plans activities which are educationally oriented"; and the weekly child care cost showed significant differences at the .001 level between Children's Center parents and day care home parents. No difference was found between subtotals of rank scores of child-oriented items and parent-oriented items. Seven clusters were formed by the clustering of items. The first and most important cluster contained items relating to formal education with emphasis on child-centered and staff/program-centered items. The cluster of parents by similarity of responses resulted in four parent clusters being formed but produced no descriptive information about the clusters. Ten items were significant when differences in responses of four parent clusters were analyzed; however, no similarity emerged among the clusters in the ranking of the items.

The study indicates that parents do not choose their child care based on reasons which are child-oriented or parent-oriented; nor do those reasons influence choices between public school day care

centers and licensed day care homes. Both null hypotheses were not rejected.

According to the study single parents choose their child care because the facility offers:

1. a structured program with a well-trained competent staff which focuses on the needs of the child,

2. practical aspects such as being near their home or flexible hours which makes dealing with out-of-home child care easier for them, and

3. an environment which provides an extension of the home.